

THE TREMITI MOSAIC AND ELEVENTH-CENTURY FLOOR DECORATION IN EASTERN ITALY

CLARA BARGELLINI

The abbey church of S. Maria on the Tremiti Island of San Nicola off the coast of Apulia is decorated with one of the finest extant medieval mosaic floors.¹ This mosaic is, moreover, in relatively good condition and can be dated to the period immediately preceding 1045, the year of the dedication of the church, rebuilt under Abbot Alberic (1039–47).² Judging from what remains, we can suppose that the mosaic originally covered the entire floor (Fig. 1).³ The unusual plan of the

church combines a longitudinal axis with a strong emphasis on an ample central space.⁴ Compound piers surround this space and separate it from the relatively narrow side aisles and from the two bays which extend the church to both the east and the west. The entrance bay has a second story, while at the east the central and one lateral apse are preserved.

Each area of the building where the mosaic is found has a corresponding figure or pattern. In the second bay from the entrance there is an eagle with spread wings within a roundel.⁵ The central space is dominated by a quincunx of which the focus is a griffin within a large circle filled with a zigzag pattern (Fig. 2). In the eastern part of the church, which is 52 cm higher than the rest of the building, a carpet of six animal roundels framed by a rinceau border originally decorated the space before the altar. Only parts of two of the original roundels, a fragment of a third, and sections of the border remain. The two extant roundels contain a griffin and the mane of what must have been a lion. Flanking this space are two areas, each enframed by four piers, where we see confronted elephants bearing towerlike castles (Fig. 3). To the east, on either side of the altar and bounded by piers and the east wall, are confronted deer with great spreading antlers. A large rosette is in the

¹The tesserae are cut from stones that had to be shipped to the island from the mainland. Some must have come from the remains of ancient buildings. Identifiable are limestones, pentelic marble, *palombino di Subiaco*, *giallo di Siena*, and a black stone from Mattinata on the Gargano, according to a Bari Soprintendenza architect. The tesserae are about one cm square; generally the background is white and the outlines black, but there are many colors, especially within the figures. The decorative patterns are in white, red, black, ochre and khaki, while the figures also contain yellow, gray, rose, violet, and a brighter white. The foundation in which the tesserae are set is grayish white.

The lion in the south aisle, because of the flatness of its forms, which contrasts with the naturalistic treatment of the other figures, may have been restored at some later medieval date. Cruder medieval restorations are to be seen to the north of the main entrance and in the northeastern part of the central area. Some restoration was done in 1904–6 when a “calco del pavimento a mosaico” was made, according to Soprintendenza records. The “calco” may exist in Naples, then the Soprintendenza headquarters, but I was unable to locate it. In 1935 a report was made that there were many holes (“molte buche”) in the mosaic. Full restoration was undertaken in 1960–63. The repairs, in *pietra di Trani*, are clearly discernible. In 1962, during the course of work on the roof of the church, the central griffin roundel was damaged.

²H. Bloch, *Monte Cassino in the Middle Ages* (Rome-Cambridge, Mass., 1986), II, 689–94. The mosaic, briefly discussed on p. 690, is not specifically mentioned in any document, but the documents that report the building of the church, taken together, give the impression that the construction, presumably including the mosaic, was completely finished at the time of its dedication in 1045. The stylistic comparisons discussed here bear out this dating.

³The drawing (Fig. 1) was done from photographs and sketches and, therefore, is not absolutely exact, although it is accurate. The existing architectural elements are in black. Note

that, at the corners of the central eastern area, clustered piers were added probably in the 13th century: A. Petrucci, *Codice diplomatico del Monastero Benedettino di S. Maria di Tremiti (1005–1237)*, I, FStI 98 (Rome, 1960), lxxi. At that time the four inner piers, hatched in the drawing, were removed. The alterations destroyed parts of the elephant and deer panels and adjacent areas.

⁴C. McClendon, “The Church of S. Maria di Tremiti and Its Significance for the History of Romanesque Architecture,” *JSAH* 43 (1984), 5–19.

⁵P. Belli D’Elia, *Alle sorgenti del Romanico, Puglia XI secolo* (Bari, 1975), 183–87, illustrates this and other images of the floor not reproduced here.

apse. In the south aisle is a lion within a roundel, in the center of an area bounded by ornamental borders. The eastern border is a row of animal roundels. Two are partly preserved, and one of these encloses a griffin (Fig. 4). The eastern section of the north aisle is filled by a field of intersecting circles.

Around the figures and enframing the different sections of the floor are finely designed decorative patterns, some foliate or floral, some purely geometric. Many of these are in rectangular panels which correspond to the areas between piers and define the architectural spaces on the mosaic (Fig. 1). For example, zigzag patterns flank the carpet of animal roundels before the altar and separate it from the elephants. Other examples are the panels of interlace that occupy the spaces between the piers below and above the elephants and the panels of imbrication and floret patterns flanking the deer. There also were interlace panels between the piers on either side of the eagle near the entrance.

The mosaics serve, furthermore, to give direction and emphasis to the architectural spaces. On the longitudinal axis there is a series of circles: the eagle roundel, the griffin quincunx, the roundel carpet, and finally the apse rosette. The eagle roundel practically fills its space and makes a strong entrance statement. Next, the griffin quincunx preserves the longitudinal axis by not filling the great central space. Its overall dimensions, in fact, are dictated by the width between the piers. On the other hand, the quincunx dominates its space and the church; it is in the very center of the largest and tallest subdivision of the building, and the composition itself emphasizes outward expansion. The griffin leaps out of its circular frame (Fig. 2), while in the circle around it, which is as large as it can possibly be, the zigzag pattern serves as an abstract equivalent of the griffin's movement radiating outward. The repetitive foliate patterns around the quincunx, though very rich as decoration, offer no comparable dynamic interest. Proceeding toward the altar, one feels that, because of the lack of a central dominant element, the roundels of the presbytery seem to offer a resting place. Indeed, in the eastern part of the church it is the lateral mosaics, the deer and elephants, that provide most interest and emphasize the center. They face it and establish its importance. The apse rosette closes the longitudinal series of circles.

How does one explain such a rich and coherent floor mosaic? The few scholars who have given the mosaic their attention have considered it a Byzantine work: an instance of "oriental decoration of

which no example is preserved in the Orient," as Emile Bertaux put it.⁶ This claim has been based on the high quality of the mosaic, the iconography and style of some of its images, and its alleged similarity to earlier Byzantine floors known through texts. In fact, some of the patterns and figures of the Tremiti mosaic do bring to mind Byzantine works. The animals, especially the deer and elephants, for example, can be compared with those that appear in the more or less contemporary *Cynegetica* of Pseudo-Oppian in the Marciana, Gr. 479.⁷ Indeed, the central griffin's white highlights and the careful delineation of features in the animals would seem to betray painted models (Figs. 2 and 3). The foliate patterns, too, recall in a general way Byzantine ornament, such as that enframing the biblical scenes at St. Luke, Phocis.⁸

On the other hand, if one looks closely, some of these same foliate patterns display traits that are also to be associated with the West. An example is the palmette in the north aisle (Fig. 5) whose organic features have been transformed into an interlace pattern. The interlace panels themselves have decidedly western parallels. In fact, it is in the contemporary Bari Benedictional where one can find the best painted comparisons for the Tremiti collection of foliate and interlace ornament.⁹ In another Apulian manuscript, Troia Exultet I, also of the mid-eleventh century, there is an eagle whose coloring and appearance can well be compared to the Tremiti one.¹⁰ More Tremiti patterns and figures find counterparts in other Apulian art of the period, mainly in the so-called *Acceptus*

⁶E. Bertaux, *L'art dans l'Italie méridionale* (Paris, 1904), 483–88, is still the most complete and thought-provoking analysis of the Tremiti mosaics. B. Molaioli, "Monumenti e opere d'arte nell'Isola di San Nicola delle Tremiti," *Iapigia* 6 (1953), 399–404, first published photographs of the mosaic. He compared it to "oriental textiles" and "Sassanian art" and proposed that it was the work of "maestranze provenienti da qualche più evoluto centro orientale." F. Delli Muti, *Le Isole Tremiti* (Turin-Rome, 1965), 58–61, agrees with Molaioli and finds similarities between the Tremiti griffin and Roman works.

⁷The illustrations of fols. 19v and 32r, for example, make good comparisons for the Tremiti figures. The latest discussion of this manuscript is in J. C. Anderson, "Cod. Vat. Gr. 463 and an Eleventh-Century Byzantine Painting Center," *DOP* 32 (1978), 192–96, with previous bibliography. Anderson dates the manuscript "perhaps slightly earlier than 1062–3."

⁸E. Diez and O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece: Hosios Lucas and Daphni* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), plates, passim.

⁹G. Cavallo, *Rotoli di Exultet dell'Italia meridionale* (Bari, 1973), 125–26, pls. 12–17, for example. The roll, as well as its probable date around mid-11th century, is discussed by H. Belting, "Byzantine Art among Greeks and Latins in South Italy," *DOP* 28 (1974), 14–18, who considers it an example of Byzantine influence in Italy and thus, in my view, analogous to the Tremiti floor.

¹⁰Cavallo, *Rotoli di Exultet*, 136, pl. 28, dated in the middle of the 11th century.

school of sculptures, many of which predate the mosaic by a few years. The Tremiti eagle, for example, can be compared with those of the 1039 Siponto pulpit, the 1041 Monte S. Angelo pulpit, and the imprecisely dated Canosa pulpit in its hieraticism, symmetry, clear delineation of details, and in the formal treatment of the regular volumes and surface patterns.¹¹ The many comparisons that can be made between Tremiti figures and patterns and other works in various media in Apulia lead to the conclusion that, although the mosaicists may have known Byzantine works directly, which would hardly be surprising, this fact alone does not warrant calling the floor a Byzantine work. At most, we can speak of Byzantine influence on Italian art.

Nevertheless, no series of comparisons with works in other media can account fully for this extraordinary floor. Here, rather than present more comparisons, local or otherwise, for specific images at the Tremiti, I prefer to look at the mosaic within the context of the history of floor decoration as such. A discussion of this kind has to be tentative and fundamentally about general trends, because none of the floors I shall mention have been studied sufficiently. Most have suffered a great deal of restoration, while some, which were excavated years ago and are no longer in place, lack basic documentation. Very little technical information, which would help in identifying workshops and procedures, is available about them. When these floors are dated, it is usually according to the foundation or dedication of the churches to which they belong, and such information is not always applicable. Despite all these reservations, some trends do emerge from taking a closer look at a dated and relatively well preserved mosaic like the one at Tremiti and trying to understand its relationship to other floors.¹²

Precisely because they are floors, the ninth-century Byzantine mosaics described in texts, which Bertaux adduced as comparisons for the Tremiti floor, deserve closer consideration. He cites the descriptions of a floor with a peacock and eagles in the palace at Constantinople and a floor with various figures at the Nea Ekklesia, both from the time of Basil I.¹³ Bertaux was impressed by the correspondence with the animal imagery of the

Tremiti floor. Furthermore, in the case of Basil's palace floor, he also considered the general design: a quincunx whose circles contained figures, as in the center of the Tremiti mosaic. It is a fact that quincunxes are found on a good number of the medieval Byzantine floors that are preserved. From the few surviving examples it would appear that quincunxes were often to be seen on floors in the centers of architectural spaces in eleventh-century Byzantine churches, be they in the nave, as at Olynthus,¹⁴ or in the transept arms, such as at St. Luke, Phocis.¹⁵

There is a problem of technique in these comparisons for the Tremiti floor, however. Unfortunately, the Byzantine floors with figures mentioned by Bertaux are not preserved, but they may well have been in opus sectile rather than tessellated, perhaps with figures of the kind seen in the Pantokrator Church in Constantinople, for example.¹⁶ In fact, truly tessellated figured floors in the East are known only from periods much before or after the eleventh century.¹⁷ One cannot, of course, exclude the possibility of tessellated floors having been produced in the East during the eleventh century, but the present evidence overwhelmingly indicates that this technique was confined to the West in that period. It is difficult to ignore this technical matter in attempting to define the relationship of the Tremiti mosaic to Byzantine and Western traditions. Although it may be that the Tremiti mosaic is a survival of a Byzantine type of

¹⁴G. Bendinelli, "Intorno all'origine e per una nuova denominazione dei mosaici 'Cosmateschi,'" *Studies Presented to David Moore Robinson*, I (St. Louis, 1951), 813–28, pl. 107. The Olynthus floor would seem to postdate somewhat the Tremiti floor.

¹⁵H. Kier, *Der mittelalterliche Schmuckfussboden* (Düsseldorf, 1970), fig. 317. The floor of St. Luke may predate the Tremiti floor. Belting, "Byzantine Art," 15 note 49, summarizes the opinions concerning the dating. For other Byzantine quincunxes, see Kier's figs. 313–22.

¹⁶P. A. Underwood, "Work of the Byzantine Institute," *DOP* 9–10 (1956), 299 ff.

¹⁷After the Early Christian and Early Byzantine periods, there are no fully tessellated floors in the East, to my knowledge, until the 12th century when such a floor was laid at the Monastery of the Blachernes outside Arta in Greece: A. C. Orlandos, "He para ten Artan Mone ton Blachernon," *Archeion* 2 (1936), 28 ff.

A possible exception is the floor in the gallery of the Holy Sepulcher which has been dated to around the middle of the 11th century by V. Corbo, "La Basilica del S. Sepolcro a Gerusalemme," *Studi biblici francescani* 19 (1969), 99–103. I think that it is related to the group of floors examined further on in this study: note the use of both sectile and tessellatum, certain ornamental patterns that recall those at S. Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna (note 42 below) and the animals represented, which are reminiscent of those at Pomposa (note 24 below) and at S. Donato di Murano (note 29 below). One wonders to what extent medieval tessellated floors in the East might be due to western influence.

¹¹Belli D'Elia, *Alle sorgenti*, 36–39, 58–59, 86–91, discusses and illustrates all these pieces.

¹²A brief presentation of some of the ideas that follow appeared in my contribution to Belli D'Elia, op. cit., 183–87.

¹³Bertaux, *L'art*, loc. cit. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972), 181 and 194 for the Nea Ekklesia description.

decoration, the technical point urges some caution and warrants looking in other directions.

Quincunxes were not confined to the Byzantine world and to the floor of the Tremiti in the eleventh century. They also appear very prominently on some other Italian floors of the Adriatic region in this period. These Adriatic floors predate the famous sectile Monte Cassino floor, whose design is also based largely on quincunxes, arranged to emphasize the longitudinal axis of the church rather than to focus on a single space.¹⁸ The first of the Adriatic floors is probably the sectile one in the presbytery of the basilica of Torcello (Fig. 6), which can be dated to soon after 1008.¹⁹ The *rota* design of this floor made an impression at the time, since the area around the church was named after it, according to the eleventh-century Grado Chronicle.²⁰ A sectile quincunx is also the principal element in the right arm of S. Marco, the first section of floor to be set, and thus of the 1070s, at the earliest.²¹

Three other eleventh-century floors of the area also display quincunxes. At Pomposa a quincunx that is partly sectile and partly tessellated, and that has a very large central circle as at Tremiti, is the principal element in the eastern area of the nave.²²

¹⁸D. Glass, *Studies on Cosmatesque Pavements*, BAR International Series 82 (Oxford, 1980), 25 ff.

¹⁹According to John the Deacon, writing in the first half of the 11th century, Bishop Orso Orseolo (1008–12) had the church of Torcello completely restored: "Sancte Marie domum et ecclesiam iam pene vetustate consumptam recreare studiosissime fecit." See M. Brunetti et al., *Torcello* (Venice, 1940), 603–4. The presbytery floor, at least, must have been part of this reconstruction, although it need not have been fully completed before 1012.

²⁰R. Cessi, ed., *Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense*, III (Rome, 1933), 5, 31: "Basilicam fundaverunt in honore sancte Dei genetricis et Virginis Marie pulcherrimo pavimento ornatum, cuius medium pulchritudine sua rota quedam admodum decorabat, unde omnis habitatio qui ipsi ecclesiae proxima erat ab Aurio tribuno Rota appellata fuit."

²¹Kier, *Schmuckfussboden*, fig. 330. Modern scholars, relying on the 15th-century Bembo Chronicle, consider the original S. Marco floor to have been begun under the patronage of Doge Domenico Selvo, elected in 1071, or shortly after his death in 1084. For stylistic and historical reasons all agree that the earliest section of the floor is in the right transept. Certainly, the mosaics there fit into the group of 11th-century floors examined here, because of their patterns and technique, especially the presence of much tessellatum and the straightforward handling of the quincunx. Of course the entire mosaic has been restored many times. The most complete study of the S. Marco floor remains that of G. M. Urbani de Ghelthof, in F. Ongania, ed., *La Basilica di San Marco* (Venice, 1888) (hereafter *San Marco*), 227–34. See also O. Demus, *The Church of S. Marco in Venice*, DOS 6 (Washington, D.C., 1960), 74, and the appendix by F. Forlati, 197; and P. L. Zovatto, *Mosaici paleocristiani delle Venezie* (Udine, 1963), 168–69.

²²H. Stern, "Le pavement de la basilique de Pomposa," *CahArch* 18 (1968), figs. 2, 3; Kier, *Schmuckfussboden*, fig. 327. The western part of the floor also centers on a quincunx, but

At Carrara S. Stefano, near Padua, a sectile quincunx fills the area in front of the altar (Fig. 7). Another is at S. Vittore of Ravenna, although the excavation information does not specify its original location in the church.²³ Unfortunately, the dating of these three floors is problematic. The famous 1026 inscription at Pomposa need not necessarily refer to the laying of the floor. For historical and stylistic reasons I prefer a date around 1063 for the eastern part of the Pomposa floor, related to the construction of the porch and bell tower, although some fragments of the western section may be earlier.²⁴ The other two floors must be dated stylistically. The best comparison for the tessellated areas at Carrara²⁵ is the floor of S. Nicolò di Lido (Fig. 8), tentatively dated for historical reasons around the middle of the eleventh century.²⁶ The

this area is perhaps a 12th-century restoration of an earlier floor. See note 24 below.

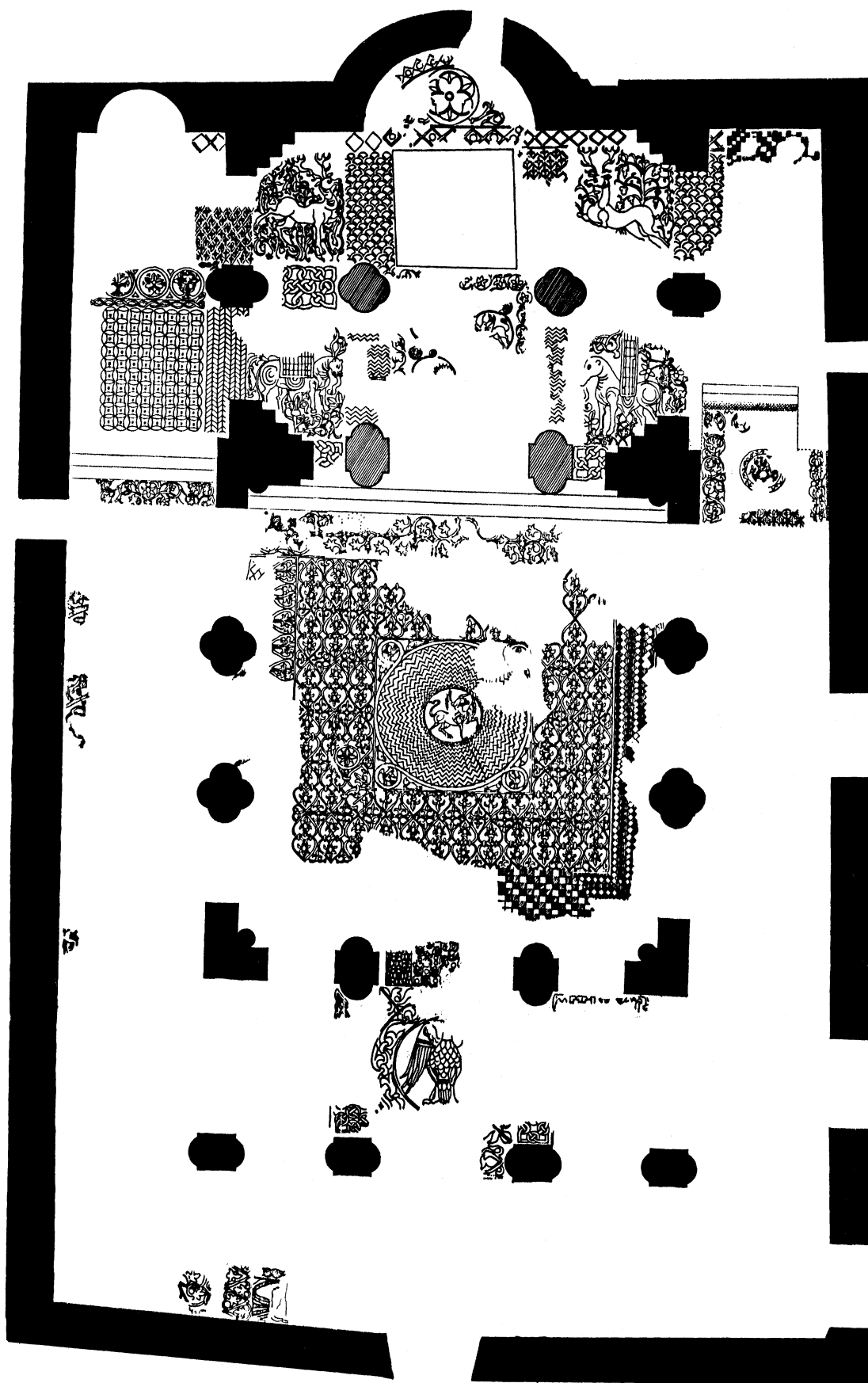
²³T. Kirilova Kirova, "La distrutta chiesa di San Vittore di Ravenna," *FR* 105–6 (1973), 65 ff and figs. 4, 8.

²⁴M. Salmi, *L'Abbazia di Pomposa* (Rome, 1936), 127–32, and Stern, "Pomposa," 157–69, both accept the 1026 date inscribed on a marble slab inserted in the eastern part of the floor as the date of the mosaic. However, there would have been reasons to commemorate the 1026 dedication of the church at a later time. The Abbot Guido, who was responsible for the dedication, was venerated as a saint and had had problems of jurisdiction with the bishop of Ravenna: Salmi, op. cit., 5, and A. Samartini, ed., *Regesta Pomposiae* (Rovigo, 1936), 78–104. Perhaps the monks wanted to vindicate him as well as memorialize him and the dedication at a later time. Only a new architectural history of the building, which should be clarified by the recent excavations, and stylistic comparisons can resolve the question of the dating of the different parts of the Pomposa floor.

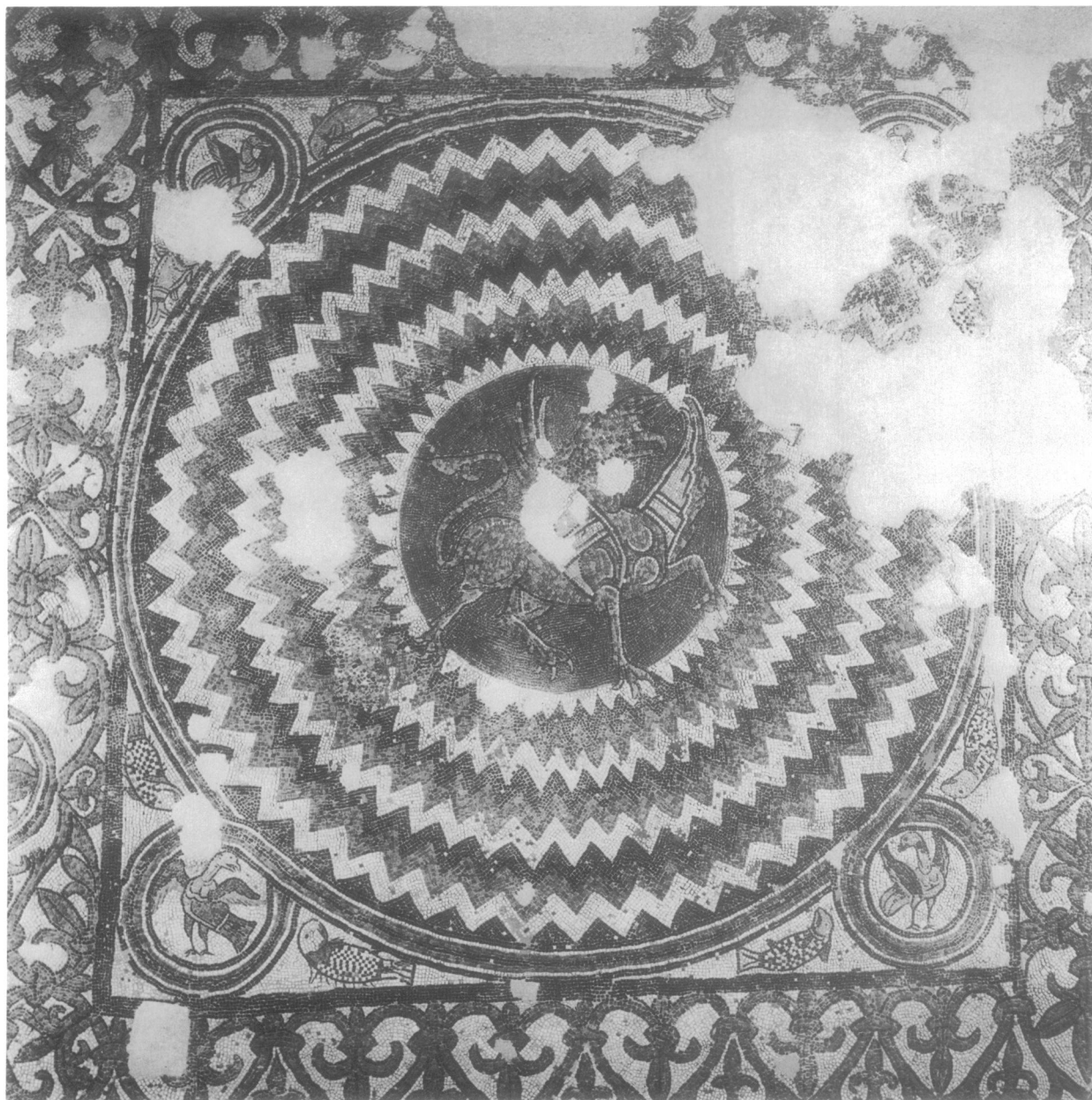
The best comparisons for the figures of the eastern section are the porch sculptures and a fragment of floor mosaic from the narthex. This part of the building was probably erected around the middle of the 11th century, before 1063 when the campanile was begun, according to an inscription. The narthex mosaic fragment was dated by Salmi to the 13th century because of its rough technique; op. cit., 133–35 and fig. 255. However, the only difference between it and the mosaics in the church is that the latter have been heavily restored. It is reasonable to believe that the floor would have been laid after the porch was completed, around the time the campanile was begun. Fragments of the western nave floor are very similar to the Torcello floor in technique and patterns. Perhaps these belong to the earlier 11th century. A possible confirmation that an earlier sectile floor existed at Pomposa is a piece of sectile setting bed found during the recent excavations: L. Pavan, *Mostra didattica dei restauri a Pomposa, 1975–77* (Forlì, 1977), fig. 5.

²⁵The Carrara mosaics are published only in C. Boito, *La chiesa di Carrara Santo Stefano presso Padova* (Milan, 1873), 3–5, who provides a plan and drawing of part of the tessellated area on either side of the quincunx. He states that the church was founded around 1027.

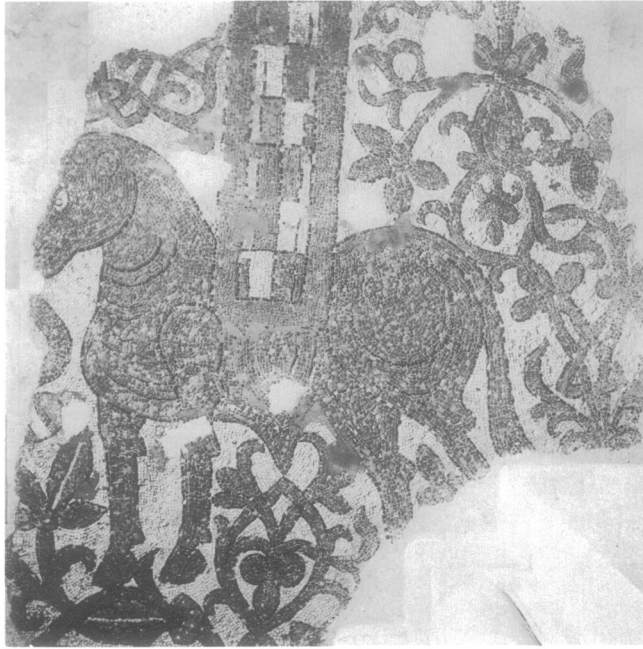
²⁶The mosaics of S. Nicolò probably date before 1071 when Doge Domenico Selvo was elected there: F. Forlati, "Da Rialto a S. Ilario," *Storia di Venezia*, II (Venice, 1958), 646–48. If F. San-sovino, *Venetia città nobilissima* (Venice, 1663), 239, is correct, they would date after 1044, when the church was built by Contarini. For additional illustrations see L. Gallo, *Lido di Venezia, Abbazia S. Nicolò* (Lido di Venezia, 1964).



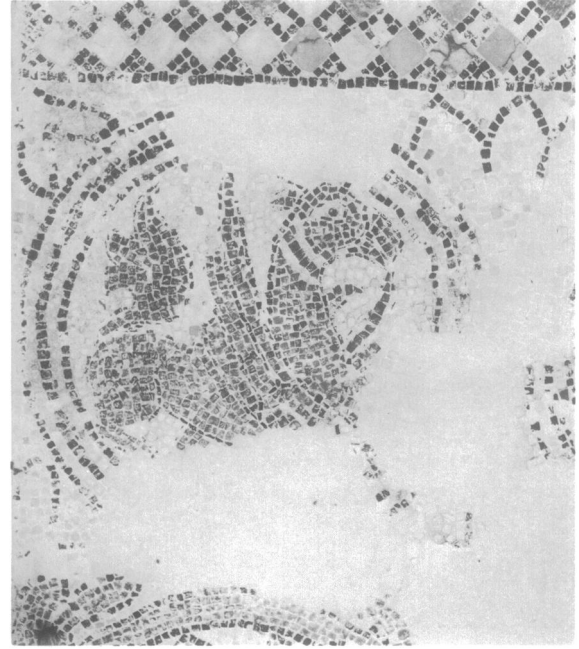
1. S. Maria delle Tremiti, floor mosaic (drawing: J. M. Castelao)



2. S. Maria delle Tremiti, floor mosaic, central quincunx (photo: Soprintendenza, Bari)



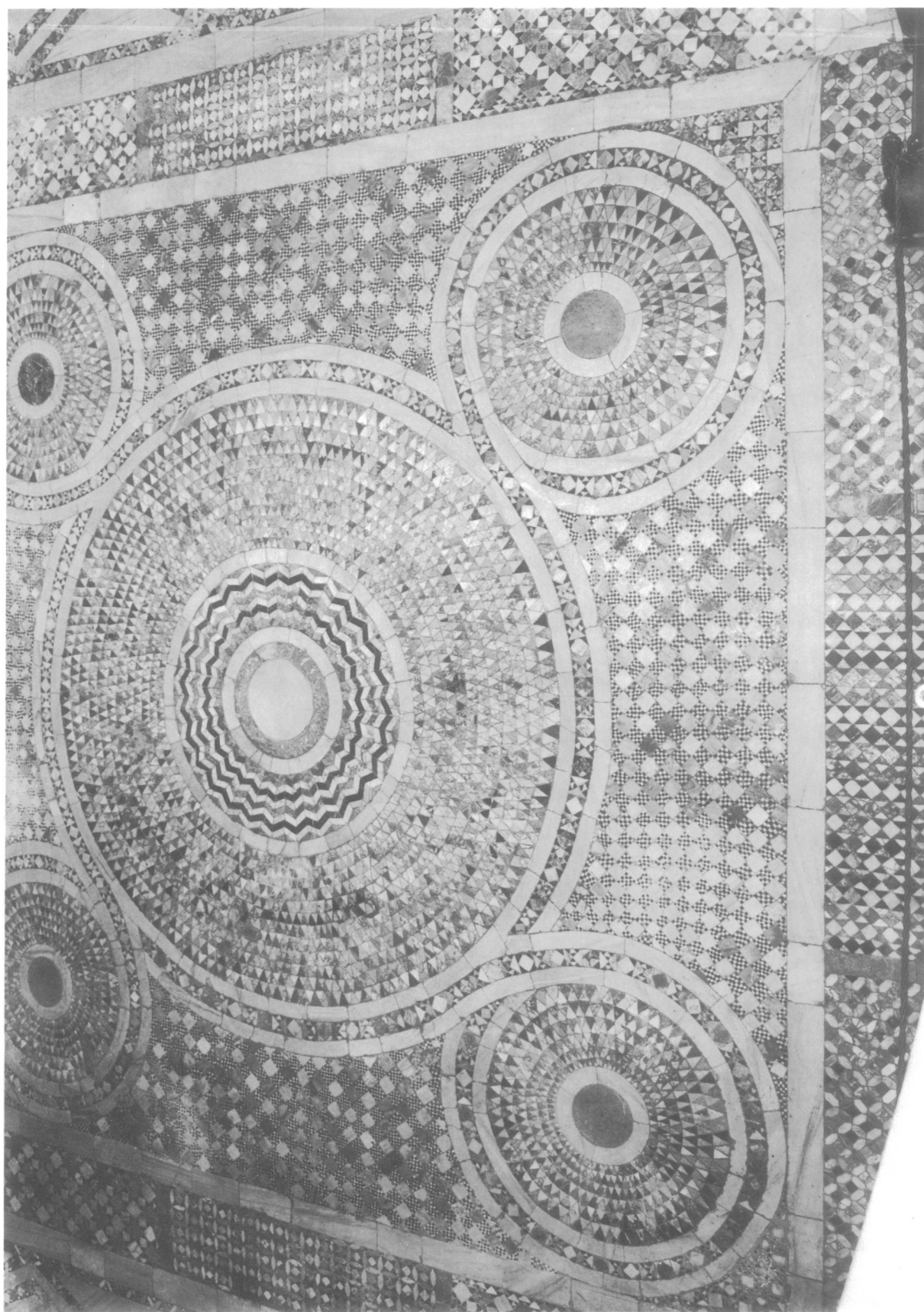
3. S. Maria delle Tremiti, floor mosaic, detail of elephant to south of presbytery (photo: Soprintendenza, Bari)



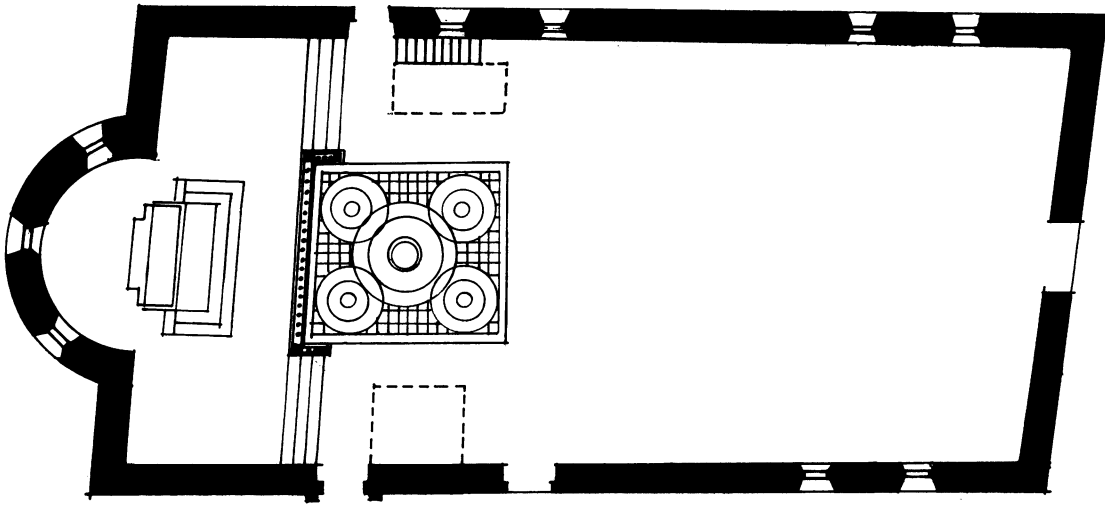
4. S. Maria delle Tremiti, floor mosaic, detail of griffin in south aisle (photo: Soprintendenza, Bari)



5. S. Maria delle Tremiti, floor mosaic, detail of palmette in north aisle (photo: Soprintendenza, Bari)



6. S. Maria Assunta, Torcello, sectile floor, quincunx of presbytery (photo: O. Böhm)



7. S. Stefano, Carrara, plan indicating areas of floor mosaic
(plan: A. Echeverría, after C. Boito)



8. S. Nicolò di Lido, Venice, floor mosaic, detail
(photo: Soprintendenza, Venice)

mosaic of S. Vittore, the most fragmentary of all these, resembles that of Carrara in its relatively simple patterning, and thus could also date from the second half of the eleventh century.²⁷

Despite the problems of specific chronology, it is important that the quincunx, placed in the center of an architectural area, as at Tremiti, is a hallmark of the designs of all these floors. Furthermore, at least at Torcello, S. Marco, and Pomposa, rectangular panels filled with various patterns occupy the lateral or subordinate areas, as seen at Tremiti. Finally, all these floors have in common three prominent sectile patterns (all to be seen in Fig. 6). The first consists of sectile squares alternating with tessellated squares, where the tesserae are arranged either with black tesserae framing the squares and providing a single central accent or in a checkered pattern. The second is made up of a row of large diamonds alternating with a row of small squares; the third is formed by intersecting octagons, each composed of a central square, sometimes in opus tessellatum, and of four hexagonal parallelograms. Also, in all of these floors the large circles are filled with a pattern of triangular wedges radiating from the center, and they are framed by variations of running lozenge patterns.²⁸

The Tremiti floor can be compared with this northern Adriatic group not only in its use of the central quincunx and subordinate rectangular panels, but also in technique, patterns, and iconography. It is true that the Tremiti floor is predominantly tessellated, while the other floors have relatively more sectile areas. On the other hand, the sectile work that occurs at Tremiti is in the form of the first pattern described above. It is to be seen to the north of the entrance and in the south aisle (Fig. 4). Also, many of the features of the Tremiti figures are rendered not in square tesserae but with stones cut to correspond to the shapes of particular features, a procedure that approaches sectile work (Fig. 4, eyes, beak, and collar). The zigzag pattern in the central circle around the griffin at Tremiti (Fig. 2) can be seen as a tessellated equivalent of the sectile triangular wedge pattern of the

other floors. Another technical point can be made about the checkered arrangement of tesserae found in the fish near the corner circles of the central area at Tremiti (Fig. 2). This is a common device in Adriatic floors in general, both before and after the eleventh century. In the eleventh-century floors it is to be seen, for example, in animals and plants at S. Marco, S. Nicolò (Fig. 8), Pomposa, and Carrara.²⁹ A final technical characteristic is common to the Adriatic floors. They are notable for their range and variety of color. This is an important change with respect to the tradition of earlier medieval floors of the area which are predominantly black and white.³⁰

As for similarities in patterns, the panels of interlace at Tremiti, such as those below the elephants (Fig. 1), have a parallel on a small section of the S. Marco floor.³¹ This type of interlace design has precedents on earlier medieval floors in the Veneto³² and is not at all common on medieval floors elsewhere. Its use at Tremiti is a strong reason to group that floor with the Adriatic ones. Some of the foliate patterns at Tremiti also find counterparts on the northern Adriatic floors. The

²⁹ It is also to be seen on the 9th-century floor from S. Ilario (founded in 819) now in the Venice Archeological Museum: Forlati, *Da Rialto*, 638–40 and pl. 1a; and on the heavily restored fragment of S. Pietro in Castello in Venice: L. Mortari, "Nota sui mosaici pavimentali delle chiese venete tra il IX e il XII secolo," *BA*, ser. 4, 34 (1949), 264. The checkered convention continued to be used especially on Venetian floors: at S. Zaccaria, X. Barral i Altet, "La mosaïque de pavement médiévale de l'église Saint Zacharie de Venise," *BAnFr* (1976), 93–94; and at S. Donato in Murano: H. Rathgens, *S. Donato zu Murano* (Berlin, 1903), 77–85, fig. 81. It is also to be seen in the medieval restorations of the floor of S. Vitale in Ravenna, barely mentioned by R. Farioli, *Pavimenti musivi di Ravenna paleocristiana* (Ravenna, 1975), 123 ff.

³⁰ The color of the 11th-century Adriatic mosaics also distinguishes them from another roughly definable group of Italian 11th-century tessellated floors from Tuscany. The floors of S. Trinita, Florence, and of the Duomo Vecchio of Arezzo are basically black and white with animals in roundels and ornamental foliate patterns. A fragment of the S. Trinita floor is in the Bargello. R. Baldaccini, "S. Trinita nel periodo romanico," *Rivista d'arte* 26 (1950), 30 note 11, dates it after 1092. H. Saalman, *The Church of S. Trinita in Florence* (New York, 1966), 43, reports finding another fragment of this floor. The Arezzo mosaic is preserved in a dozen fragments, now affixed to the walls of the chapel of the Psychiatric Hospital of the city. This mosaic has been mentioned only in passing, most recently by G. De Angelis D'Ossat, "Il Duomo Vecchio di Arezzo," *Palladio*, 3rd ser., 27 (1978), 34.

The characteristic use of color and combined sectile and tessellated work on 11th-century floors of the Veneto has also been recognized by Barral, especially in "La mosaïque d'Aquilée."

³¹ Urbani de Ghelthof, in *San Marco*, fig. on p. 230.

³² At S. Ilario, note 29 above, at Torcello, discussed below, at S. Michele in Cervignanano del Friuli, tentatively dated in the 8th–9th centuries: G. Brusin, in *Storia de Venezia*, II (Venice, 1958), 544–45, figs. 130–31. There are simple versions also at Aquileia: Barral, "La mosaïque d'Aquilée," figs. 11, 14.

²⁷ Kirilova Kirova, "San Vittore," 73 note 11, calls the floor "late Ottonian or Romanesque." The relatively mediocre quality of the floor makes dating uncertain.

²⁸ The eastern quincunx at Pomposa is different in technique from all the others. All the sectile patterns mentioned, however, are found at Pomposa in the fragments of the western part of the nave. Two of these patterns are seen also on the apse floor at Aquileia, convincingly dated to the first half of the 11th century by X. Barral i Altet, "La mosaïque de pavement médiévale dans l'abside de la basilique patriarcale d'Aquilée," *CahArch* 26 (1977), 114–15, esp. figs. 8, 17.

leaf rinceau around the animal panel in the presbytery at Tremiti resembles a simpler version at Carrara, while a more complex variety is to be seen around the panels of bird roundels in the south transept at S. Marco.³³ The foliate pattern at the foot of the presbytery steps at Tremiti, especially, can best be compared to a simpler but similar border in the southern apse at S. Marco.³⁴ Finally, one can cite again the floor of S. Nicolò di Lido (Fig. 8) for its ornamental foliate designs which, in their synthesis of the organic and geometric, recall the Tremiti style.

In addition to these techniques and decorative patterns, the major iconographic themes of the Tremiti floor also link it to the northern Adriatic group. Even though the Tremiti figures are invariably better executed and more lively, it is striking that three of the principal subjects found at Tremiti are also found at Pomposa; at least one was on the original S. Marco floor, and another is at Carrara. One of these subjects is the confronted deer located at Tremiti on either side of the original altar. Among medieval Italian floors known to me, this image of Early Christian origin appears only at Tremiti, at Pomposa,³⁵ and at Termoli, a later floor related to the one at Tremiti.³⁶ Panels of animals within roundels like that in front of the altar at Tremiti are also found at S. Marco.³⁷ Elephants occur at Tremiti and at Pomposa,³⁸ while the eagle

with spread wings is to be seen at Tremiti and at Carrara.³⁹

I have already pointed out that an important difference between the northern Adriatic floors of the eleventh century and the floor at Tremiti is that the latter is almost entirely tessellated, while the former include relatively more sectile work. This is almost the same problem we encountered when comparing the Tremiti mosaic to Byzantine floors. However, in contrast to the Byzantine panorama of floor decoration, a case can be made that tessellation had been predominant on floors of the Veneto before the eleventh century; possibly the tradition of opus tessellatum had continued uninterrupted from the Early Christian period.⁴⁰ The best preserved of these earlier floors is that at Gazzo Veronese.⁴¹ Important, though poorly documented, is the composite Early Christian and medieval floor of the cathedral of Pesaro.⁴² Although it lacks great visual interest, a particularly significant ex-

³³ Urbani de Ghelthof, in *San Marco*, pl. 42 (7), may have existed on the original floor in some form, although what is to be seen today is clearly a later work.

³⁹ The bird at Carrara, however, is peculiar. In "spread-eagle" position, it nevertheless has some henlike traits. There are also eagles at S. Marco, although they are heavily restored: Urbani de Ghelthof, in *San Marco*, pls. 42 (6) and 43 (10).

⁴⁰ X. Barral i Altet, "Note sui mosaici pavimentali dell'alto medioevo nell'Italia del nord," *Antichità altoadriatiche* 8 (1975), 275–85, is the most recent summary of this discussion and provides previous bibliography. Barral believes there was continuity from Early Christian times, although he admits to problems in dating.

⁴¹ The fundamental studies of the Gazzo floor are by P. L. Zovatto, "I mosaici altomedioevali di Gazzo Veronese," *Stucchi e mosaici altomedioevali, Atti del VIII Congresso di Studi sull'Arte dell'Alto Medioevo* (Milan, 1962), 260 ff, and in *Verona e il suo territorio*, II (Verona, 1964), 577 ff, both with illustrations. The mosaics are dated according to the foundation of the abbey around the mid-9th century and also through their stylistic and technical resemblance to other mosaics similarly dated, especially those of S. Ilario, Venice.

⁴² Farioli, "Tangenze," states that none of the Pesaro floor is visible, but, in fact, two fragments can be seen at 1.70 m below the modern floor. The rubbery bodies in the left side of the nave recall the 13th-century portions of the floor in S. Giovanni Evangelista in Ravenna: R. O. Farioli, "I mosaici pavimentali della chiesa di S. Giovanni Evangelista di Ravenna," *CorsiRav* 17 (1970), 303 ff and, by the same author with the same title, in *FR* 102 (1970), 169–222. They can also be compared to figures of the mosaic floor of the cathedral of Reggio Emilia: M. Degani, *I mosaici romanici di Reggio Emilia* (Reggio Emilia, 1961), pls. III–XXIII. The other visible fragment from the right side of the nave at Pesaro has sections of guilloche and rinceau whose naturalism seems Early Christian in style, while an adjacent flat, linear design seems medieval. The deer in the center of the nave could be Early Christian or, if compared to those at Tremiti, which they resemble (if one is to believe the 1866 drawing of them in the Museo Oliveriano, Pesaro, published by Farioli), possibly 11th century.

In Campania, also, a tradition of opus tessellatum may have existed before the 11th century: A. Rusconi, "La Basilica di Santa Maria di Compulteria presso Alvignano," *CorsiRav* 14 (1967), 331–36, briefly discussed a partly tessellated floor not

³³ Urbani de Ghelthof, in *San Marco*, pl. 42 (7).

³⁴ Kier, *Schmuckfussboden*, fig. 331.

³⁵ Ibid., fig. 327.

³⁶ There are two large areas, as well as smaller fragments, of floor mosaic at Termoli. These are on two levels, at about one meter and at about 40 cms below the present nave floor. The deer are in the center of the nave at the lowest level where, according to G. D'Andrea, *Appendice di cenni storici su Termoli* (Termoli, 1938), 1 ff, there was also a winged creature within a roundel with a zigzag border. At this same level there are fragments in mixed tessellated and sectile techniques. All these characteristics and the geographical proximity make it likely that the Termoli mosaic is related to the one at Tremiti, although the latter displays a much higher quality of execution.

Deer are also present at S. Zaccaria, Venice (note 29 above), although their position is not heraldic: there are two, very restored, and in a single panel to the left in front of the apse. Two other Adriatic instances of deer which are sometimes considered medieval, at S. Maria della Piazza in Ancona and at Pesaro, may be earlier. For the first: G. Bovini, "La chiesa paleocristiana sottostante S. Maria della Piazza di Ancona," *CorsiRav* 13 (1966), 48 and fig. 43. R. O. Farioli, "Tangenze Ravennati nell'arte musiva pavimentale paleocristiana del litorale medio-adriatico," *ibid.*, 22 (1975), 215 ff and fig. 12, for the Pesaro floor and note 42 below.

³⁷ Urbani de Ghelthof, in *San Marco*, pl. 42 (7). There is a panel of interlaced animals at Pomposa also, although it is not so regular in design as the ones just mentioned: Kier, *Schmuckfussboden*, fig. 327.

³⁸ Kier, loc. cit. The elephant being attacked by a winged lion in the north transept of S. Marco, Urbani de Ghelthof, in *San*

ample occurs at the basilica of Torcello where a tessellated floor preceded the eleventh-century sectile one. Two fragments of the earlier floor can still be seen approximately 20 cms below the nave floor. One is a portion of an interlace pattern practically identical to a part of the S. Ilario floor, Venice, and the other is a simple grid pattern.⁴³ Thus, when it was set in the eleventh century, the sectile floor at Torcello was a departure in technique from previous practice. At Torcello, it would seem, the Byzantine quincunx scheme was adopted along with Byzantine technique. Later in the century, the Torcello innovation was repeated at S. Marco, Pomposa, and Carrara, but combined with large areas of the more familiar tessellated mosaic. On the floor at the Tremiti the older technique of opus tessellatum was almost completely retained.

It is noteworthy that meaningful figures become important on these eleventh-century floors. This is a change from the essentially decorative character of earlier Adriatic floors. Occasionally these included elements reminiscent of Early Christian tradition, as in the case of the grapes and kantharos at Gazzo.⁴⁴ In the eleventh century, however, the figures become larger with respect to the decorative areas. This indicates a more conscious awareness of their significance and a desire to communicate a more specific meaning. It is also characteristic that the imagery of these eleventh-century floors refers to power and triumph. At Tremiti, for example, the figures other than the deer are the eagle, the griffin, the elephant, and the lion, all of which have long histories as images of domination.⁴⁵ This iconography, clear at Tremiti and less so on the other floors, distinguishes this

group from the moralizing north Italian floors of the following century.⁴⁶ Moreover, the need for meaningful imagery on these floors may explain in part why opus tessellatum was not replaced by the abstract opus sectile introduced at Torcello. In fact, of all the Italian floors examined here, only the one at Torcello is without figures of any kind.⁴⁷ This provides yet further confirmation that tessellatum was an established practice for floor decoration in the area.

Finally, it is instructive to compare the Adriatic practices to developments elsewhere in Italy in the eleventh century, particularly in Campania where sectile was predominant, especially after the Monte Cassino floor.⁴⁸ The contrast in floor decoration between Campania and the Adriatic area is particularly interesting when one recalls that Desiderius lived at Tremiti for a few years and laid unsuccessful claim to the abbey in 1059 for Monte Cassino.⁴⁹ In other words, he surely knew the Tremiti mosaic but was not influenced by the tradition of floor decoration it represented when the time came to adorn his own basilica at Monte Cassino.

In conclusion, the Tremiti floor is part of a general Italian Adriatic phenomenon. Eleventh-century mosaicists of the Adriatic area, probably stimulated in part by the introduction of Byzantine designs and techniques, seem to have revitalized the tessellatum tradition. Their fresh interest in color and design resulted in floor mosaics that were strikingly decorative while displaying, at the same time, an awareness of the possibilities of imagery. The Tremiti floor, which also has a firm place among contemporary Apulian works, is the finest and best-preserved representative of this development in floor decoration.

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

far from Alife, tentatively dated around the beginning of the 9th century.

In Apulia itself the tessellated floor under the cathedral of Bari may be of the 8th century: Belli D'Elia, *Alle sorgenti*, 100 ff.

⁴³ Brunetti, *Torcello*, 115 note 11 on p. 122 and fig. 71. A tessellated floor also may have preceded the present S. Marco floor: L. Marangoni, *L'architetto ignoto di San Marco* (Venice, 1933), fig. 45, illustrates a small fragment of floor mosaic found at around 80 cm below the present floor level and attributes it to Domenico Selvo without explanations. I have not been able to locate this piece through the Procuratoria of S. Marco or through the Venice Soprintendenza.

⁴⁴ Zovatto, "I mosaici," fig. 6.

⁴⁵ For other examples of this imagery in Apulia, see Belli D'Elia, *Alle sorgenti*, especially 80–93, on the Canosa pieces. For discussions of the triumphal symbolism: A. Grabar, "Trônes épiscopaux du XI et XII siècle en Italie méridionale," *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch* 16 (1954), 7–52; R. Wittkower, "Eagle and Serpent," *Allegory and Migration of Symbols* (Boulder, Colo.-London, 1977), 35–36 (rpr. from *JWarb* 2 [1938–39]); W. S. Heckscher, "Bernini's Elephant and Obelisk," *ArtB* 29 (1947), 159–63; H. Stern, "Sur quelques pavements paléo-chrétiens du Liban," *CahArch* 15 (1965), 34–35.

⁴⁶ Two such floors have been studied with care: E. Kitzinger, "World Map and Fortune's Wheel: A Medieval Floor Mosaic in Turin," *PAPS* 117 (1973), 354 ff; W. L. Tronzo, "Moral Hieroglyphs: Chess and Dice at San Savino in Piacenza," *Gesta* 16.2 (1977), 15 ff.

⁴⁷ There are no figures at S. Vittore, either. However, the church is in ruins, so that it is impossible to assert that they never existed.

⁴⁸ This development deserves further study. There are sectile floors, probably somehow related to Monte Cassino, at S. Angelo in Formis (from S. Benedetto di Capua) and at S. Vincenzo al Volturno: A. Pantoni, *Le vicende della Basilica di Montecassino attraverso la documentazione archeologica* (Monte Cassino, 1973), 192–93. Others are at S. Menna at Sant'Agata dei Goti: Kier, *Schmuckfussboden*, fig. 343; and at Carinola, unpublished, as far as I know. There must be others.

⁴⁹ Bloch, *Monte Cassino*, II, 691. Desiderius was at Tremiti "per aliquot annos" between 1047 and 1059.